



ENS Rosemary Call

Active Duty: 02-June-08 to 01-August-08

Assignment: Food and Drug Administration,
Center for Drug Evaluation and Research,
Division of Drug Information, Silver Spring, MD

This summer I was let in on a secret; pharmacy's best kept secret in fact. I was given the opportunity to work for the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) as a Junior Commissioned Corps officer. I was stationed at the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research in Silver Spring, MD, and worked in the Division of Drug Information under LCDR Christine Oliver. Like most pharmacy students I assumed my career options were limited to dispensing prescriptions, but the USPHS allows for much more than that.

My assignment at the Division of Drug Information was like no other pharmacy position I have ever held. I worked along side Consumer Safety Officers to answer incoming calls to the FDA. These calls were numerous and various; some were simple like medication inquiries, adverse event reporting, and drug identification, others were more complex and dealt with new drug applications, government policies, and importation regulations. In all honesty, I *was* the FDA hotline. If you dialed 1-888-INFO-FDA from June 1 to August 2, it was very likely you spoke to me before anyone else. I never thought I would be involved in direct patient care while working at the FDA. It was inspiring, interesting, and exceptionally enriching.

As a student I was able to attend a variety of meetings, and learn about the inside workings of the FDA. I was witness to drug development and approval, and even

had the opportunity to attend an Advisory Meeting concerning the development of an investigational new drug. I experienced the heparin hang-up, double-dosed Digitek, and tainted tomatoes. I learned the appropriate channels for reporting these issues and addressing them to the public. I now know the process by which over-the-counter medications are approved and what standards they must meet. I will never again be confused about the regulation of dietary supplements. Though they are not approved by the FDA as a drug, they are regulated by the Center of Food Safety and Applied Nutrition as a consumer product. As a result of the Division of Drug Advertising and Marketing, I can no longer watch commercials for prescriptions without scrutiny. From the perspective of a future pharmacist this knowledge is invaluable.

However, I was not only exposed to the FDA but also to the United States Pharmacopoeia (USP), the American Society of Health System Pharmacists (ASHP), the Bureau of Prisons (BOP), the Pentagon, and Capitol Hill. I was fortunate to be stationed minutes away from our nation's capitol, Washington D.C. The cultural and historical aspect of the city further enhanced my internship. Washington D.C. caters to hundreds of interns every summer. I met students, at all different points in their academic careers from all different parts in the world, and formed lasting friendships with many of them. The USPHS helped make one of my most memorable summers.

The Commissioned Corps offers numerous opportunities for pharmacists and health professionals alike. I had the chance to talk to many officers in my division, and all were encouraging and insightful. These men and women are responsible for the safety and efficacy of medication, disperse timely, accurate information to the public,

and deploy during national emergencies to help those in need. The USPHS
Commissioned Corps puts the welfare of our nation first; and that truly is a secret worth
sharing.

